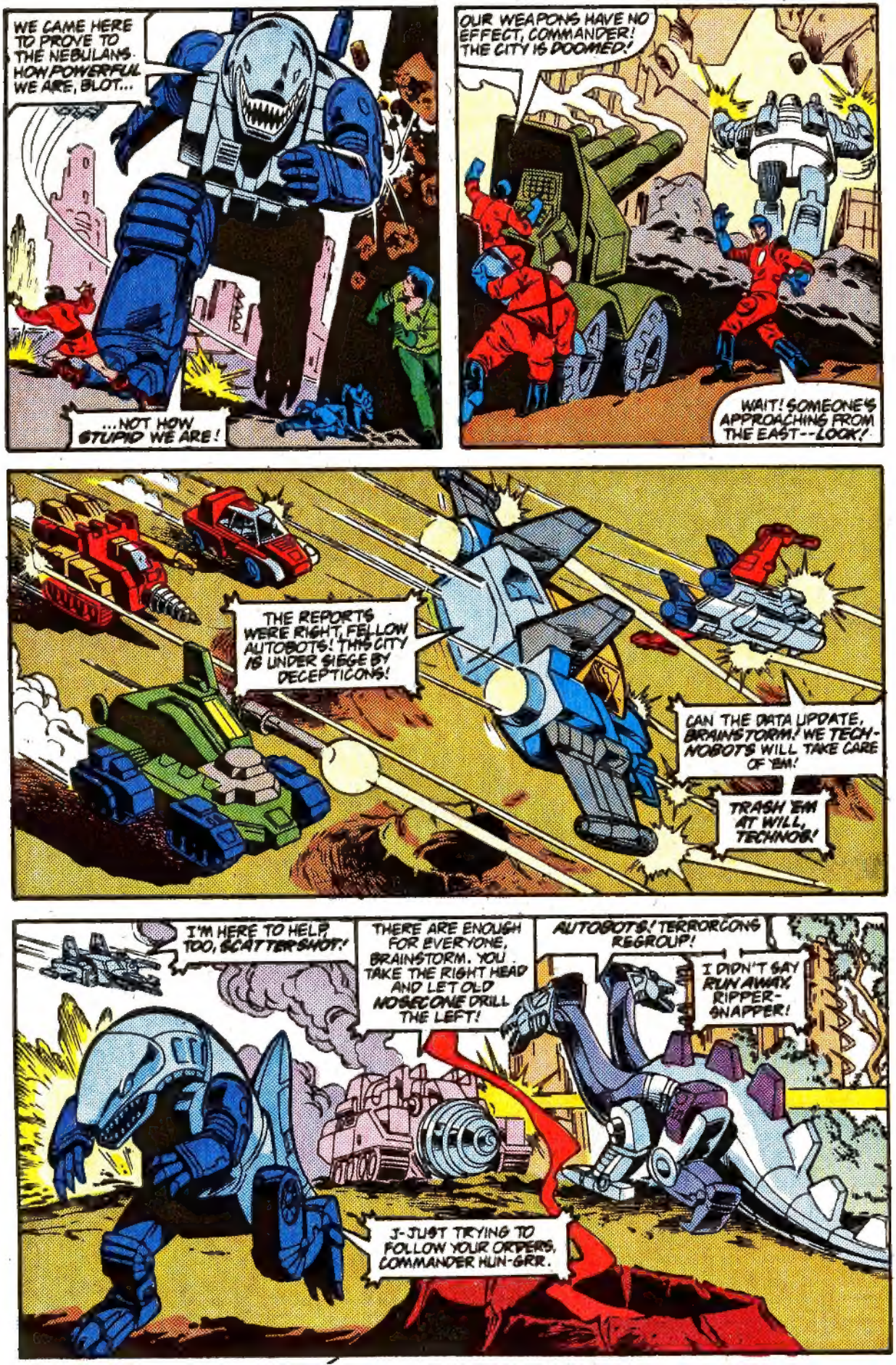
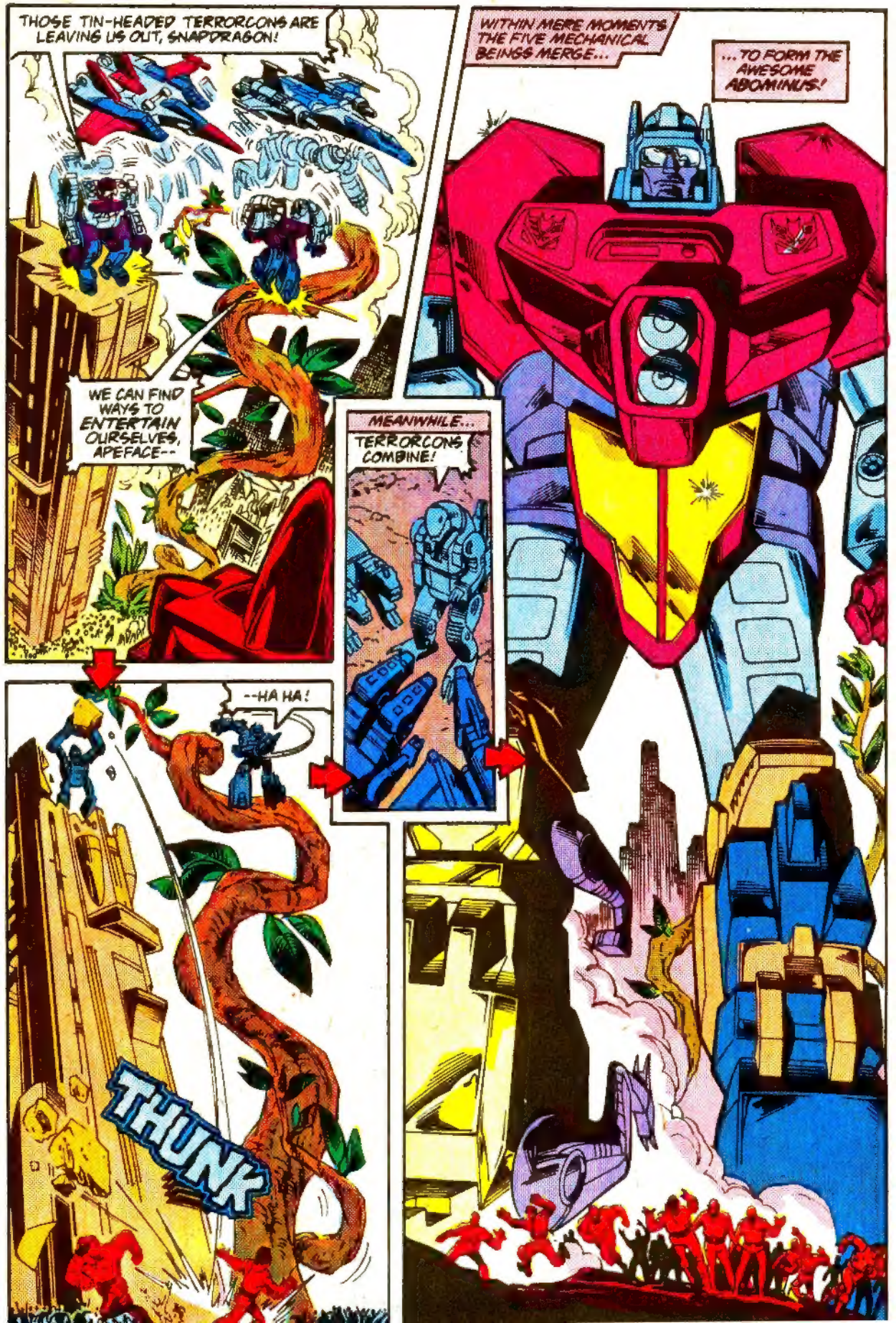
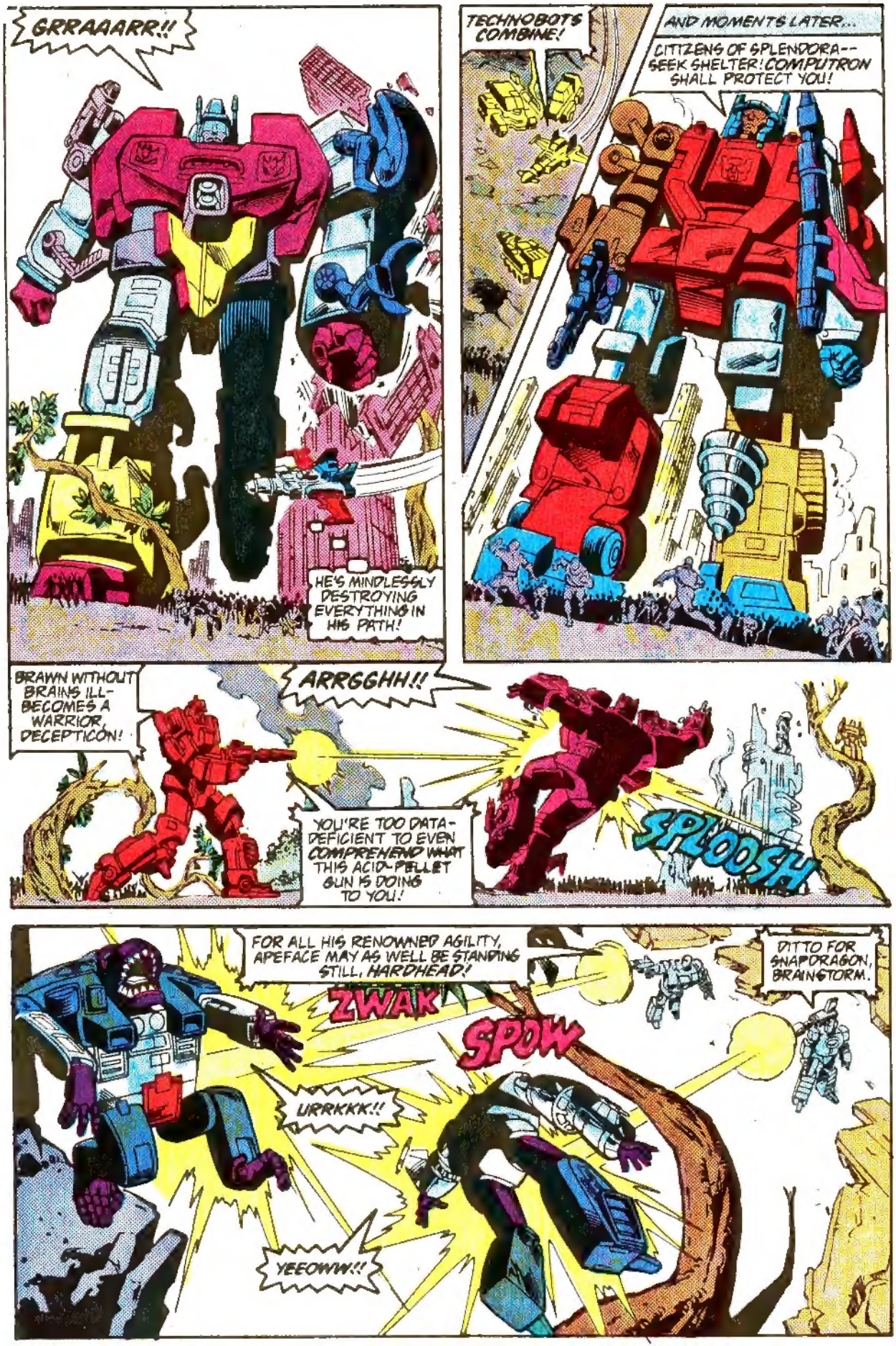
HEAD MASTERS

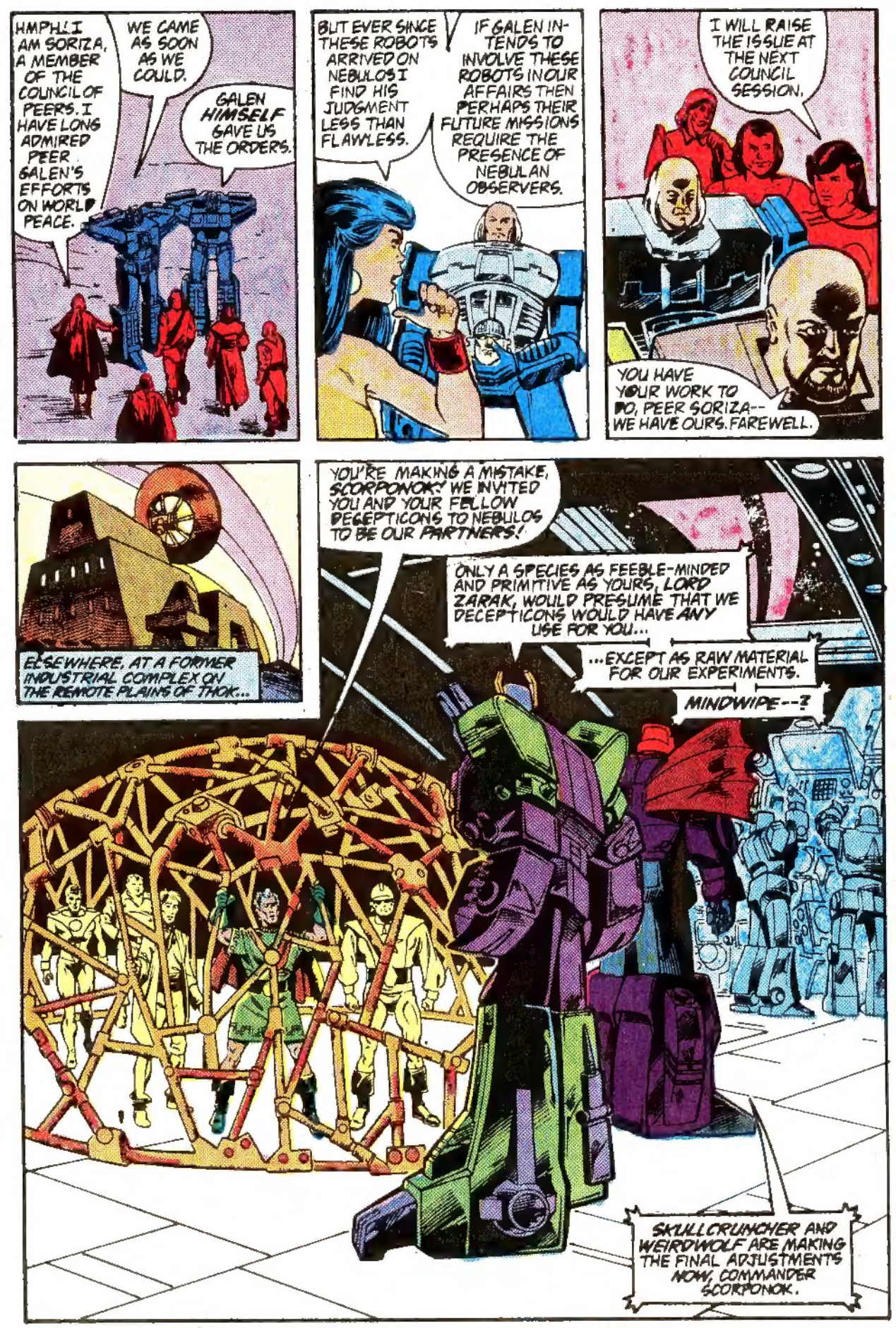
FOR UNTOLD CENTURIES SPLENDORA, A RESORT CITY ON THE PLANET NEBULOS, KNEW ONLY PEACE, BEAUTY AND PROSPERITY.
BUT ALL THAT CHANGED A FEW HOURS AGO... WHEN THESE SEVEN LIVING MECHANICAL MONSTERS -- THE DECEPTICONS APEFACE, CUTTHROAT, SNAPDRAGON, RIPPERSNAPPER, HUN-GRR, SINNER-TWIN AND BLOT --
LOVE AND STEEL!
CRUSH THEM! CRUSH THEM! LET NONE OF THE FLESHLINGS ESCAPE!
HUN-GRR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
DINNER-TIME, CUTTHROAT! THIS TERRORCON DOESN'T RUN ON BAD INTENTIONS ALONE, AFTER ALL! ;GRMMMPH!
WHY DO YOU WASTE TIME DESTROYING METAL, HUN-GRR, WHEN THIS PLACE REEKS OF ORGANIC LIFE?! RARRGSHH!
I BET WHEN YOU STEP ON THEM, RIPPERSNAPPER, THEY MAKE SQUISHY SOUNDS! HEH HEH!


WE CAME HERE TO PROVE TO THE NEBULANS HOW POWERFUL WE ARE, BLOT...
...NOT HOW STUPID WE ARE!
OUR WEAPONS HAVE NO EFFECT, COMMANDER! THE CITY IS DOOMED!
WAIT! SOMEONE'S APPROACHING FROM THE EAST--LOOK!
THE REPORTS WERE RIGHT, FELLOW AUTOBOTS! THIS CITY IS UNDER SIEGE BY DECEPTICONS!
CAN THE DATA UPDATE, BRAINSTORM! WE TECHNOBOTS WILL TAKE CARE OF 'EM!
TRASH 'EM AT WILL, TECHNOS!
I'M HERE TO HELP TOO, SCATTERSHOT!
THERE ARE ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE, BRAINSTORM. YOU TAKE THE RIGHT HEAD AND LET OLD NOSECONE DRILL THE LEFT!
AUTOBOTS! TERRORCONS REGROUP!
I DIDN'T SAY RUN AWAY, RIPPER-SNAPPER!
J-JUST TRYING TO FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS, COMMANDER HUN-GRR.

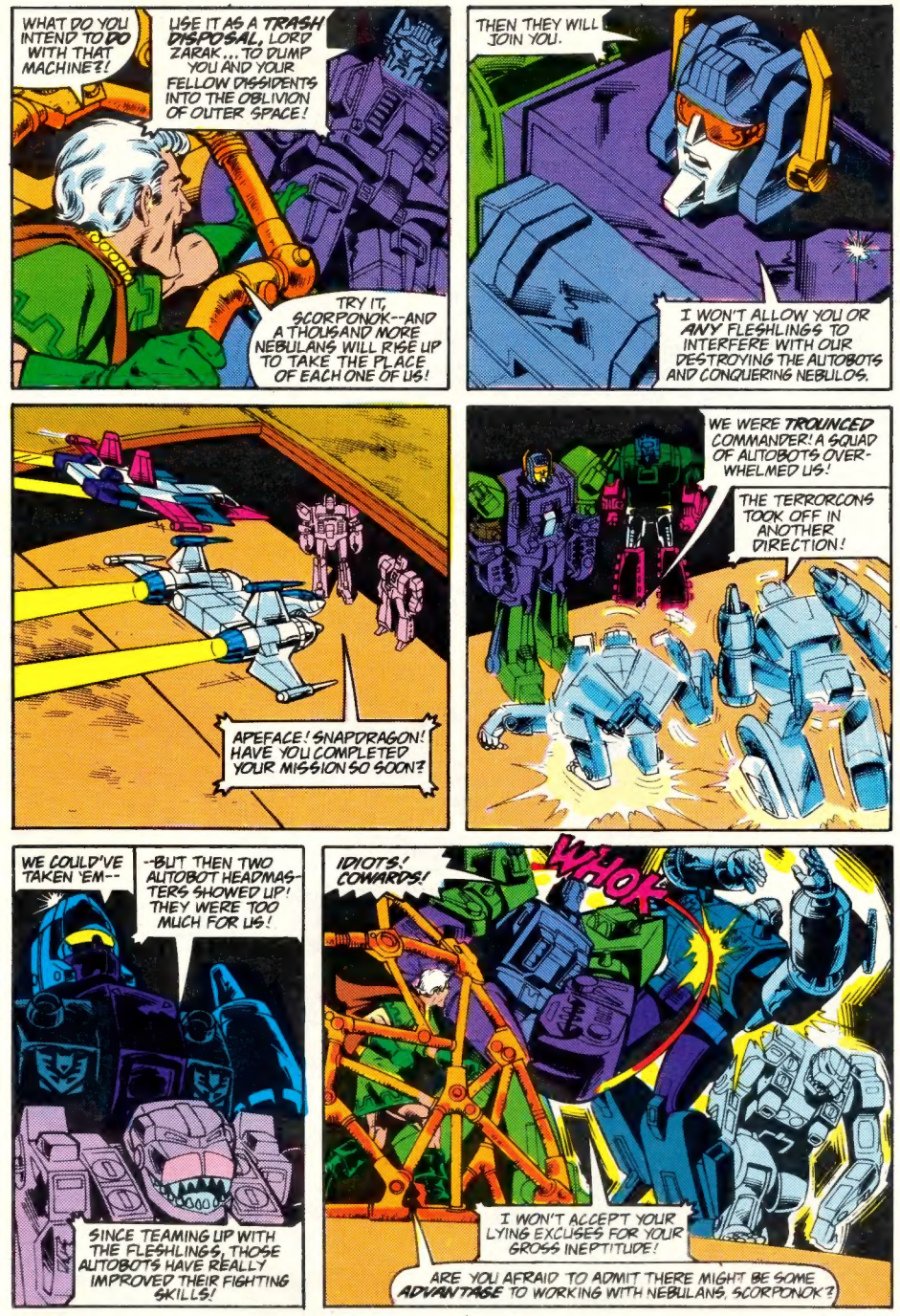

THOSE TIN-HEADED TERRORCONS ARE LEAVING US OUT, SNAPDRAGON!
WE CAN FIND WAYS TO ENTERTAIN OURSELVES, APEFACE--
--HA HA!
THUNK
MEANWHILE...
TERRORCONS COMBINE!
WITHIN MERE MOMENTS THE FIVE MECHANICAL BEINGS MERGE...
...TO FORM THE AWESOME ABOMINUS!

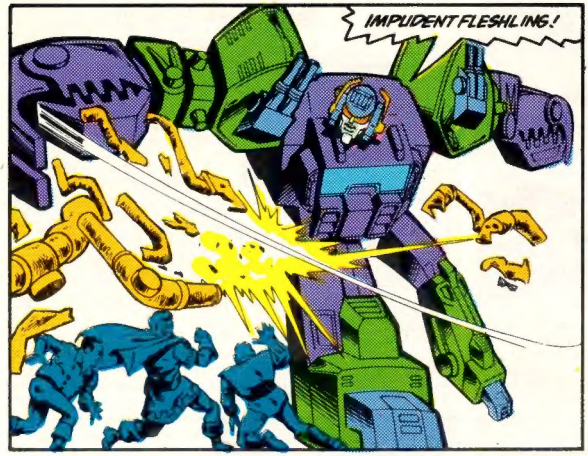

GRRAAARR!!
HE'S MINDLESSLY DESTROYING EVERYTHING IN HIS PATH!
TECHNOBOTS COMBINE!
AND MOMENTS LATER...
CITIZENS OF SPLENDORA--SEEK SHELTER! COMPUTRON SHALL PROTECT YOU!
BRAWN WITHOUT BRAINS ILL-BECOMES A WARRIOR, DECEPTICON!
ARRGGHH!!
YOU'RE TOO DATA-DEFICIENT TO EVEN COMPREHEND WHAT THIS ACID-PELLET GUN IS DOING TO YOU!
SPLOOSH
FOR ALL HIS RENOWNED AGILITY, APEFACE MAY AS WELL BE STANDING STILL, HARDHEAD!
DITTO FOR SNAPDRAGON, BRAINSTORM.
ZWAK
SPOW
URRKKK!!
YEEOWW!!

I HIT ABOMINUS SO HARD-- HE'S BREAKING APART INTO HIS COMPONENT TERRORCONS!
WHAM
WE'RE OUTGUNNED, SNAPDRAGON! HOW'D THOSE 'BOTS BECOME SUCH GOOD SHOTS?!
I'M NOT STAYING AROUND TO ASK, APEFACE!
AND AS THE SEVEN DECEPTICONS BEAT A HASTY RETREAT...
...THE PEOPLE OF SPLENDORA WARILY EMERGE FROM THEIR HIDING PLACES TO SURVEY THE DAMAGE...
YOUR CITY IS SAFE NOW. THE DECEPTICONS ARE GONE.
BUT YOU'RE NOT!
WHO'LL PROTECT US FROM YOU?!
YOUR FEARS ARE UNDER-STAND-ABLE...
...BUT HARDLY WARRANTED.
WE'RE NEBULANS, THE SAME AS YOU. I AM DUROS.
AND I, ARCANA. WE ARE COOPER-ATING WITH THESE AUTOBOTS TO DEFEND YOU.
IS IT COOPERATION THAT ALLOWS HALF OUR CITY TO BE DESTROYED.. OR CONSPIRACY?!
HOW DO WE KNOW THESE ROBOTS AREN'T IN LEAGUE WITH THOSE WHO ESCAPED?
PERHAPS YOU'RE UNDER THEIR CONTROL.


HMPH! I AM SORIZA, A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF PEERS. I HAVE LONG ADMIRED PEER GALEN'S EFFORTS ON WORLD PEACE.
WE CAME AS SOON AS WE COULD.
GALEN HIMSELF GAVE US THE ORDERS.
BUT EVER SINCE THESE ROBOTS ARRIVED ON NEBULOS I FIND HIS JUDGMENT LESS THAN FLAWLESS.
IF GALEN INTENDS TO INVOLVE THESE ROBOTS IN OUR AFFAIRS THEN PERHAPS THEIR FUTURE MISSIONS REQUIRE THE PRESENCE OF NEBULAN OBSERVERS.
I WILL RAISE THE ISSUE AT THE NEXT COUNCIL SESSION.
YOU HAVE YOUR WORK TO DO, PEER SORIZA-- WE HAVE OURS. FAREWELL.
ELSEWHERE, AT A FORMER INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX ON THE REMOTE PLAINS OF THOK...
YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE, SCORPONOK! WE INVITED YOU AND YOUR FELLOW DECEPTICONS TO NEBULOS TO BE OUR PARTNERS!
ONLY A SPECIES AS FEEBLE-MINDED AND PRIMITIVE AS YOURS, LORD ZARAK, WOULD PRESUME THAT WE DECEPTICONS WOULD HAVE ANY USE FOR YOU...
...EXCEPT AS RAW MATERIAL FOR OUR EXPERIMENTS.
MINDWIPE--?
SKULLCRUNCHER AND WEIRDWOLF ARE MAKING THE FINAL ADJUSTMENTS NOW, COMMANDER SCORPONOK.

WE CAPTURED THIS FLESHLING ESPECIALLY FOR THE OCCASION. MINDWIPE HAS ALREADY HYPNOTICALLY EXPELLED ALL FEAR FROM HIM.
THE NAME'S MONZO, PAL. WHAT'S THIS--A NEW KIND O' TANNING MACHINE?
HEY! IT'S BLOWIN' BUBBLES!
HUH--? WHAT'S HAPPENIN'?
YOU'RE GOING ON A ONE-WAY TRIP, MONZO--COURTESY OF MY ANTI-GRAVITY GUN.
I-I'M FLOAT-ING?!
VERY GOOD SO FAR, SKULLCRUNCHER.
WAIT--SOMETHING'S HAPPENING--!
APPEARS TO BE A STRUCTURAL DISORDER IN THE POLYMER MEMBRANE, COMMANDER.
POP
MINDWIPE, FETCH THAT FLESHLING. NO SENSE WASTING A GOOD LABORATORY ANIMAL.
AS YOU WISH, COMMANDER.
IN A MOMENT, MINDWIPE TRANS-FORMS TO HIS FLYING MODE...
...AND...
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO WITH HIM NOW, COMMANDER?
PUT HIM AWAY. THE POLYMER ALLOY MUST BE STRENGTH-ENED BEFORE WE CAN TEST THE MACHINE AGAIN.


WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO WITH THAT MACHINE?!
USE IT AS A TRASH DISPOSAL, LORD ZARAK... TO DUMP YOU AND YOUR FELLOW DISSIDENTS INTO THE OBLIVION OF OUTER SPACE!
TRY IT, SCORPONOK--AND A THOUSAND MORE NEBULANS WILL RISE UP TO TAKE THE PLACE OF EACH ONE OF US!
THEN THEY WILL JOIN YOU.
I WON'T ALLOW YOU OR ANY FLESHLINGS TO INTERFERE WITH OUR DESTROYING THE AUTOBOTS AND CONQUERING NEBULOS.
APEFACE! SNAPDRAGON! HAVE YOU COMPLETED YOUR MISSION SO SOON?
WE WERE TROUNCED COMMANDER! A SQUAD OF AUTOBOTS OVERWHELMED US!
THE TERRORCONS TOOK OFF IN ANOTHER DIRECTION!
WE COULD'VE TAKEN 'EM--
--BUT THEN TWO AUTOBOT HEADMASTERS SHOWED UP! THEY WERE TOO MUCH FOR US!
SINCE TEAMING UP WITH THE FLESHLINGS, THOSE AUTOBOTS HAVE REALLY IMPROVED THEIR FIGHTING SKILLS!
IDIOTS! COWARDS!
WHOK
I WON'T ACCEPT YOUR LYING EXCUSES FOR YOUR GROSS INEPTITUDE!
ARE YOU AFRAID TO ADMIT THERE MIGHT BE SOME ADVANTAGE TO WORKING WITH NEBULANS, SCORPONOK?

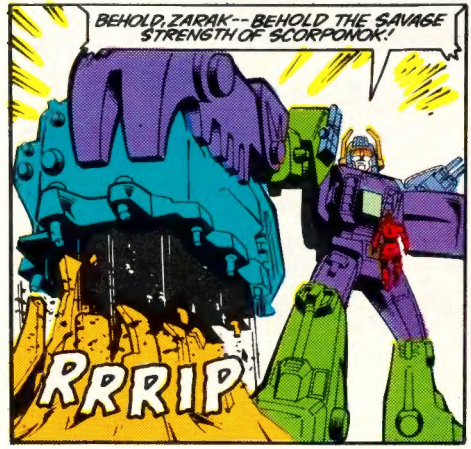

IMPUDENT FLESHLING!

I AM AFRAID OF NOTHING! YET WITH YOUR END IMMINENT, YOU DO NOT TREMBLE! WHY?!
YOU MISJUDGE ME, SCORPONOK. MY LIFE WILL HAVE NO MEANING IF MY WORLD IS TO BE TRAMPLED BY THE LIKES OF YOU.
I DO NOT FEAR YOU.

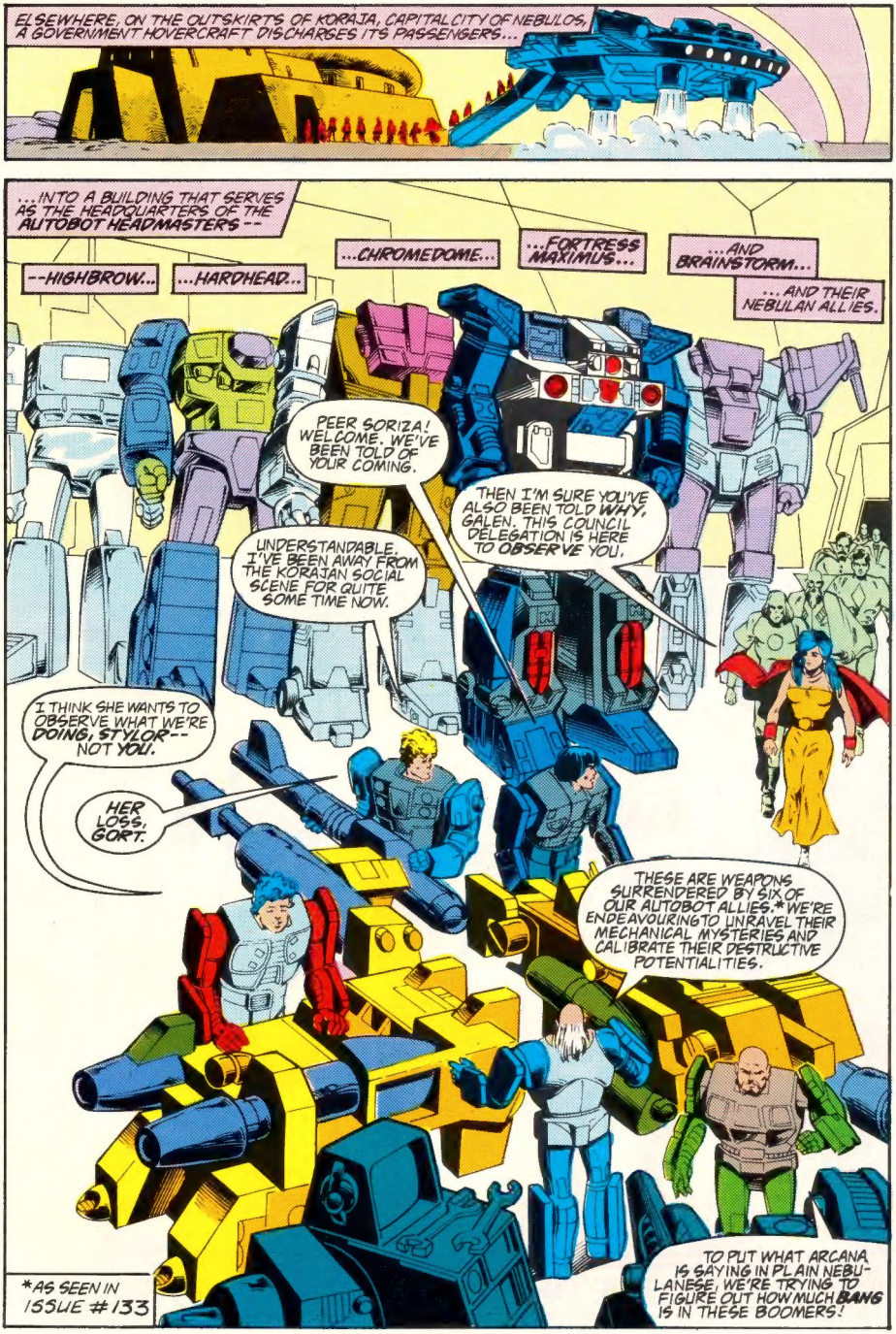
BRAVE WORDS FROM THE CONDEMNED.
MORE THAN WORDS. THAT IS WHAT I BELIEVE!
I WANT NEBULOS TO BE WHAT IT WAS-- A WORLD AT PEACE, WITH NO DANGER POSED BY YOU, BY THE AUTOBOTS, NOR BY GALEN AND HIS ALLIES.

ONLY BY OUR WORKING TOGETHER CAN THIS HAPPEN... AND YOU CAN DESTROY THE AUTOBOTS IN THE BARGAIN.
IS THAT WHAT YOU TRULY WANT, FLESHLING?
MOST OF ALL, I WANT NEBULOS TO BE SAFE...FOR MY DAUGHTER, LLYRA.

AND FOR THIS THING YOU CALL "DAUGHTER"-- YOU ASK FOR A SHARE OF MY POWER.

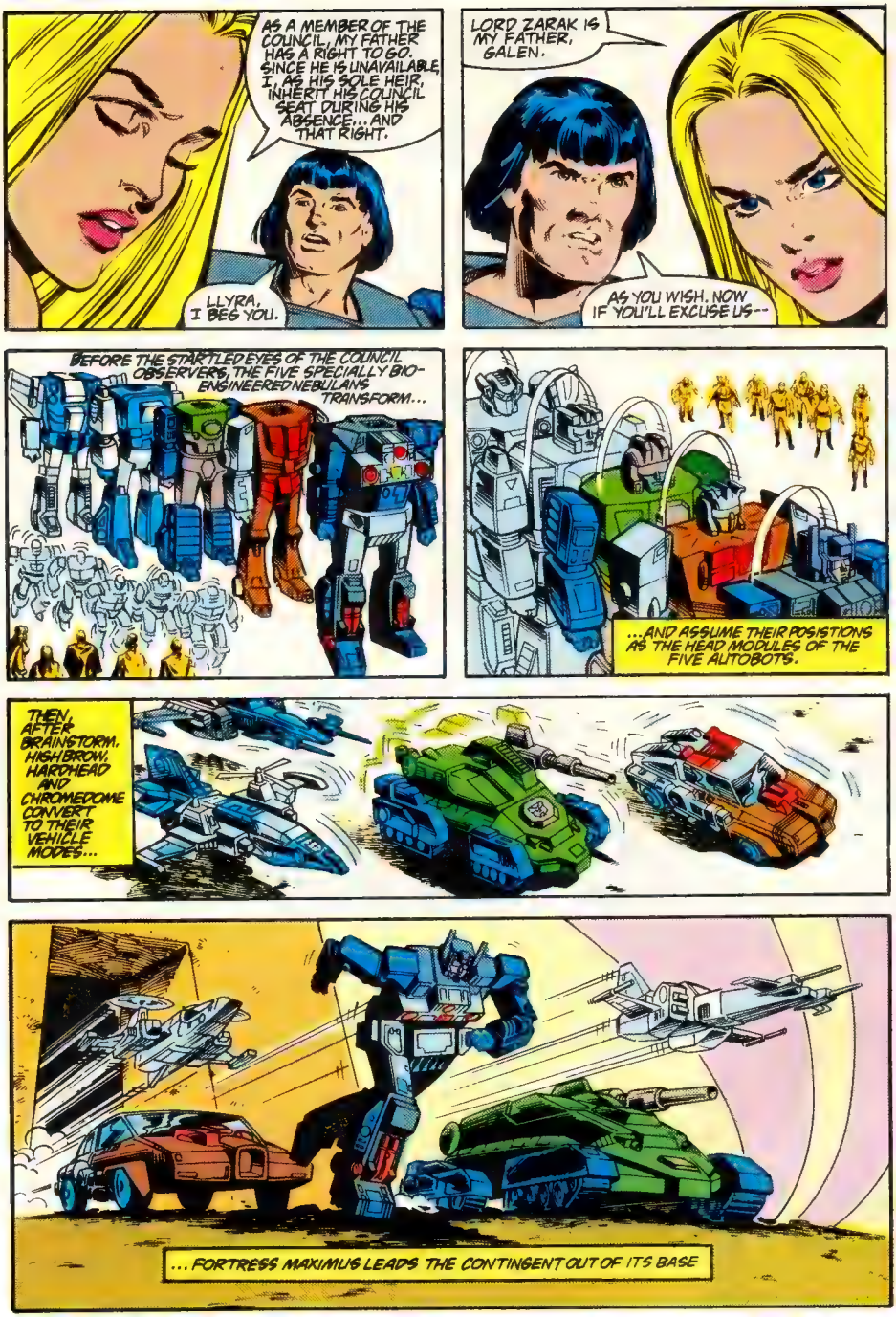

BEHOLD, ZARAK-- BEHOLD THE SAVAGE STRENGTH OF SCORPONOK!
RRRIP

KRAK
YES, PERHAPS I WILL SHARE MY POWER WITH YOU--IT IS IN MY BEST INTEREST--BUT BEWARE--
--WHEN POSSESSED OF SUCH POWER ALL OTHER CONCERNS FADE. COMPASSION. MERCY.
PERHAPS EVEN DAUGHTERS.

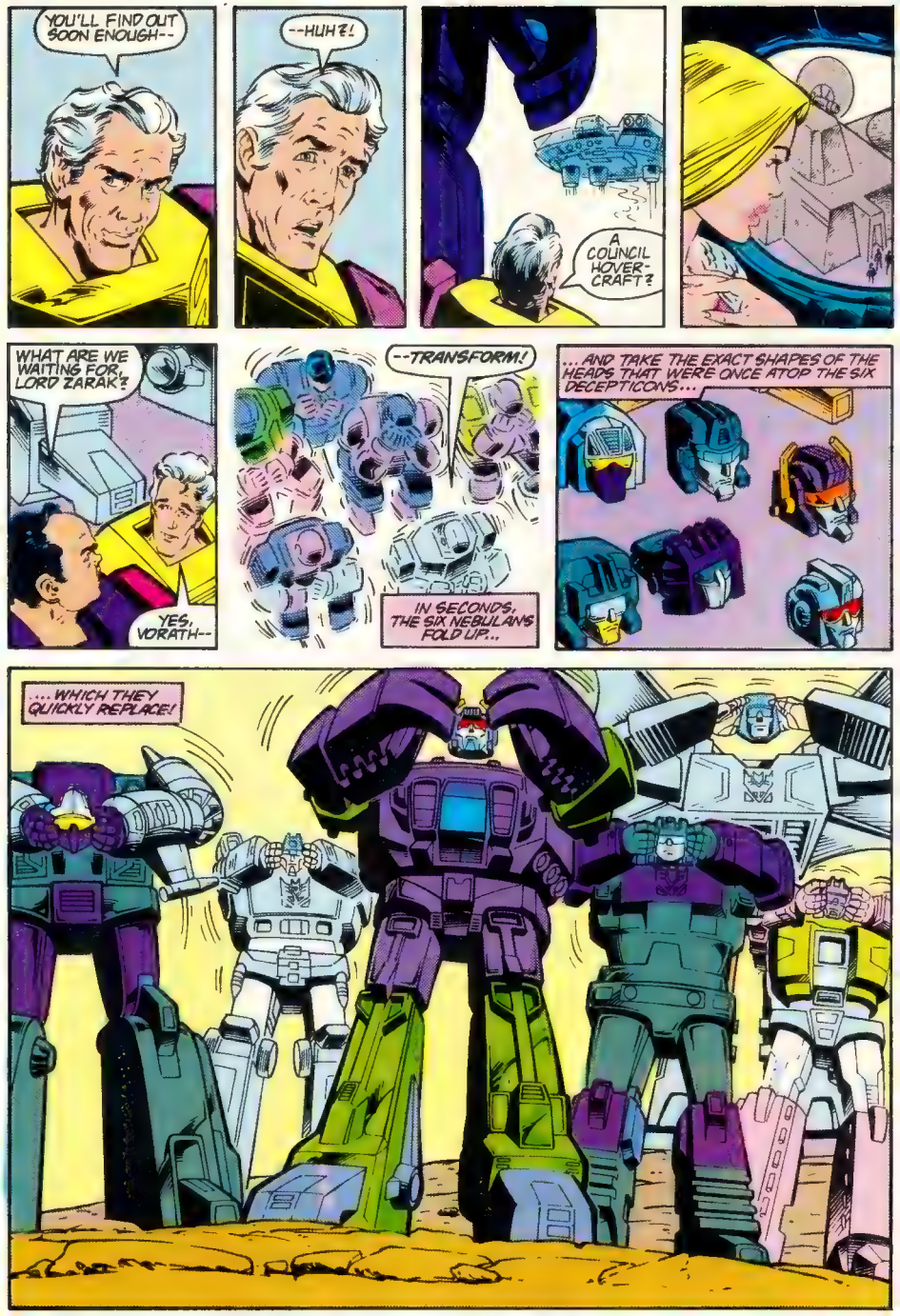

ELSEWHERE, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF KORAJA, CAPITAL CITY OF NEBULOS, A GOVERNMENT HOVERCRAFT DISCHARGES ITS PASSENGERS...
...INTO A BUILDING THAT SERVES AS THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE AUTOBOT HEADMASTERS --
--HIGHBROW...
...HARDHEAD...
...CHROMEDOME...
...FORTRESS MAXIMUS...
...AND BRAINSTORM...
...AND THEIR NEBULAN ALLIES.
PEER SORIZA! WELCOME. WE'VE BEEN TOLD OF YOUR COMING.
THEN I'M SURE YOU'VE ALSO BEEN TOLD WHY, GALEN. THIS COUNCIL DELEGATION IS HERE TO OBSERVE YOU.
UNDERSTANDABLE. I'VE BEEN AWAY FROM THE KORAJAN SOCIAL SCENE FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW.
I THINK SHE WANTS TO OBSERVE WHAT WE'RE DOING, STYLOR-- NOT YOU.
HER LOSS, GORT.
THESE ARE WEAPONS SURRENDERED BY SIX OF OUR AUTOBOT ALLIES.* WE'RE ENDEAVOURING TO UNRAVEL THEIR MECHANICAL MYSTERIES AND CALIBRATE THEIR DESTRUCTIVE POTENTIALITIES.
TO PUT WHAT ARCANA IS SAYING IN PLAIN NEBULANESE, WE'RE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW MUCH BANG IS IN THESE BOOMERS!
*AS SEEN IN ISSUE #133

ENOUGH, COUNCIL GUARD COMMANDER DUROS. WE DIDN'T COME HERE TO WATCH YOUR RESEARCH.
THE COUNCIL VOTED TO SEND A DELEGATION OF OBSERVERS TO ACCOMPANY YOU ON ALL FUTURE MISSIONS. WE BELIEVE THESE ROBOTS ARE RISKY ALLIES AT BEST.
WHAT?!
A BATTLEFIELD IS NO PLACE FOR A BUNCH OF HEADLINE-HUNTING POLITICIANS TO GO POKING THEIR NOSES!
IF THAT IS THE LAW, DUROS, THEN WE ARE DUTY-BOUND TO ABIDE BY IT.
BUT GALEN--!
OURS IS A WORLD OF LAWS. THEY ARE THE NET THAT PREVENTS US FROM PLUNGING INTO CHAOS AND ANARCHY.
BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, PEER SORIZA, DUROS'S POINT IS WELL TAKEN. WAR IS A DANGEROUS ARENA IN WHICH TO PRACTICE POLITICS.
WE ARE OBLIGED TO DO THIS FOR EVERYONE'S SAKE.
GALEN--!
LLYRA!
MY LOVE WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE YOU, BUT I'M THRILLED THAT--

OUR LOVE IS A THING OF THE PAST, GALEN. LOOK AT YOU--YOU'RE NOT THE SAME MAN TO WHOM I ONCE WAS BETROTHED!
BUT... BUT I AM!
I WEAR THIS ARMOUR TO PROTECT NEBULOS FROM THE DECEPTICONS. BENEATH IT BEATS THE HEART THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN YOURS.
PERHAPS... WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE.
BUT THE MAN I LOVED WAS IGNORANT OF THE IMPLEMENTS OF WAR, AND PROUD OF IT! HE WAS A MAN DEVOTED TO PEACE.
I CAME HERE FOR ANOTHER REASON.
THIS--A VIDEOMATRIX OF MY FATHER, WHICH I JUST RECEIVED.
MOMENTS LATER, AFTER THE VIDEOMATRIX HAS BEEN INSERTED INTO A VIEWING CONSOLE...
THIS IS LORD ZARAK. ONLY THROUGH PURE LUCK WAS I ABLE TO SMUGGLE THIS MESSAGE OUT. I AND SEVERAL OTHERS ARE BEING HELD PRISONERS BY DECEPTICONS AT THE GRAX COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY ON THE PLAINS OF THOK.
ONLY GALEN AND HIS ALLIES, THE AUTOBOTS, HAVE THE POWER TO EFFECT OUR RESCUE.
I BEG YOU, GALEN, PUT OUR PAST DIFFERENCES BEHIND YOU!
OUR SITUATION HERE IS DESPERATE. PLEASE... HELP US!
DUROS, PREPARE THE AUTOBOTS. WE LEAVE AT ONCE.
WE WILL ACCOMPANY YOU.
IF YOU INSIST.
AND I, TOO.
NO, LLYRA--I CAN'T ALLOW THAT!

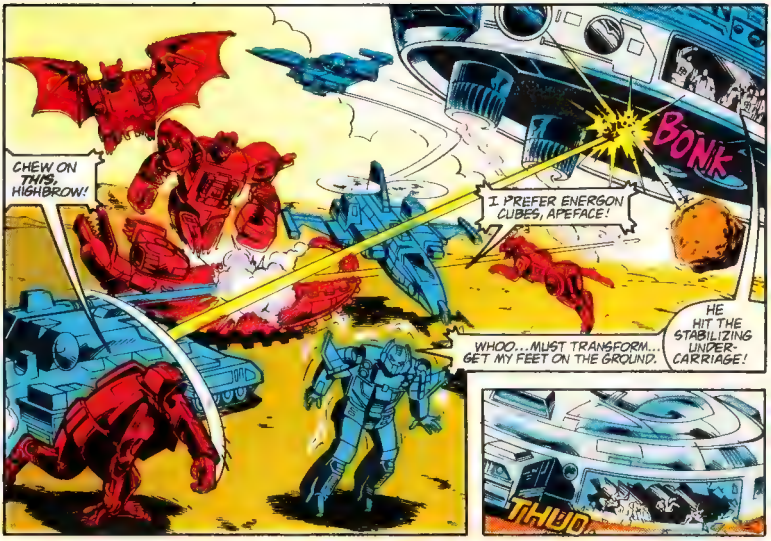

AS A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL, MY FATHER HAS A RIGHT TO GO. SINCE HE IS UNAVAILABLE, I, AS HIS SOLE HEIR, INHERIT HIS COUNCIL SEAT DURING HIS ABSENCE... AND THAT RIGHT.
LLYRA, I BEG YOU.
LORD ZARAK IS MY FATHER, GALEN.
AS YOU WISH. NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US--
BEFORE THE STARTLED EYES OF THE COUNCIL OBSERVERS, THE FIVE SPECIALLY BIO-ENGINEERED NEBULANS TRANSFORM...
...AND ASSUME THEIR POSITIONS AS THE HEAD MODULES OF THE FIVE AUTOBOTS.
THEN, AFTER BRAINSTORM, HIGHBROW, HARDHEAD AND CHROMEDOME CONVERT TO THEIR VEHICLE MODES...
...FORTRESS MAXIMUS LEADS THE CONTINGENT OUT OF ITS BASE

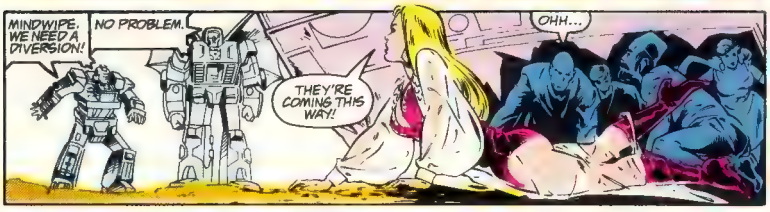
HOURS LATER AND MILES AWAY...
STATUS REPORT, KRUNK.
THEY'RE ALMOST HERE, BOSS.
YOUR PLAN TO USE YOUR DAUGHTER AS A MESSENGER WORKED, LORD ZARAK.
REGRETTABLY IT DID, GRAX. THE LAST THING I WANTED TO DO WAS INVOLVE LLYRA, BUT I HAD NO OTHER RECOURSE
USING HER WAS THE ONLY CERTAIN WAY
HIGHBROW, BRAINSTORM-- BLAST THOSE DOORS AWAY!
BUT BEFORE THE TWO CAN BEGIN THEIR ASSAULT...
LORD ZARAK--! YOU'RE...YOU'RE FREE!
THE SITUATION HERE HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY SINCE I SENT THAT MESSAGE...
AND FOR THE BETTER I MIGHT ADD!
DECEPTICONS!
WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR HEADS?!


YOU'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH--
--HUH?!
A COUNCIL HOVER-CRAFT?
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR, LORD ZARAK?
YES, VORATH--
--TRANSFORM!
IN SECONDS, THE SIX NEBULANS FOLD UP...
...AND TAKE THE EXACT SHAPES OF THE HEADS THAT WERE ONCE ATOP THE SIX DECEPTICONS...
...WHICH THEY QUICKLY REPLACE!

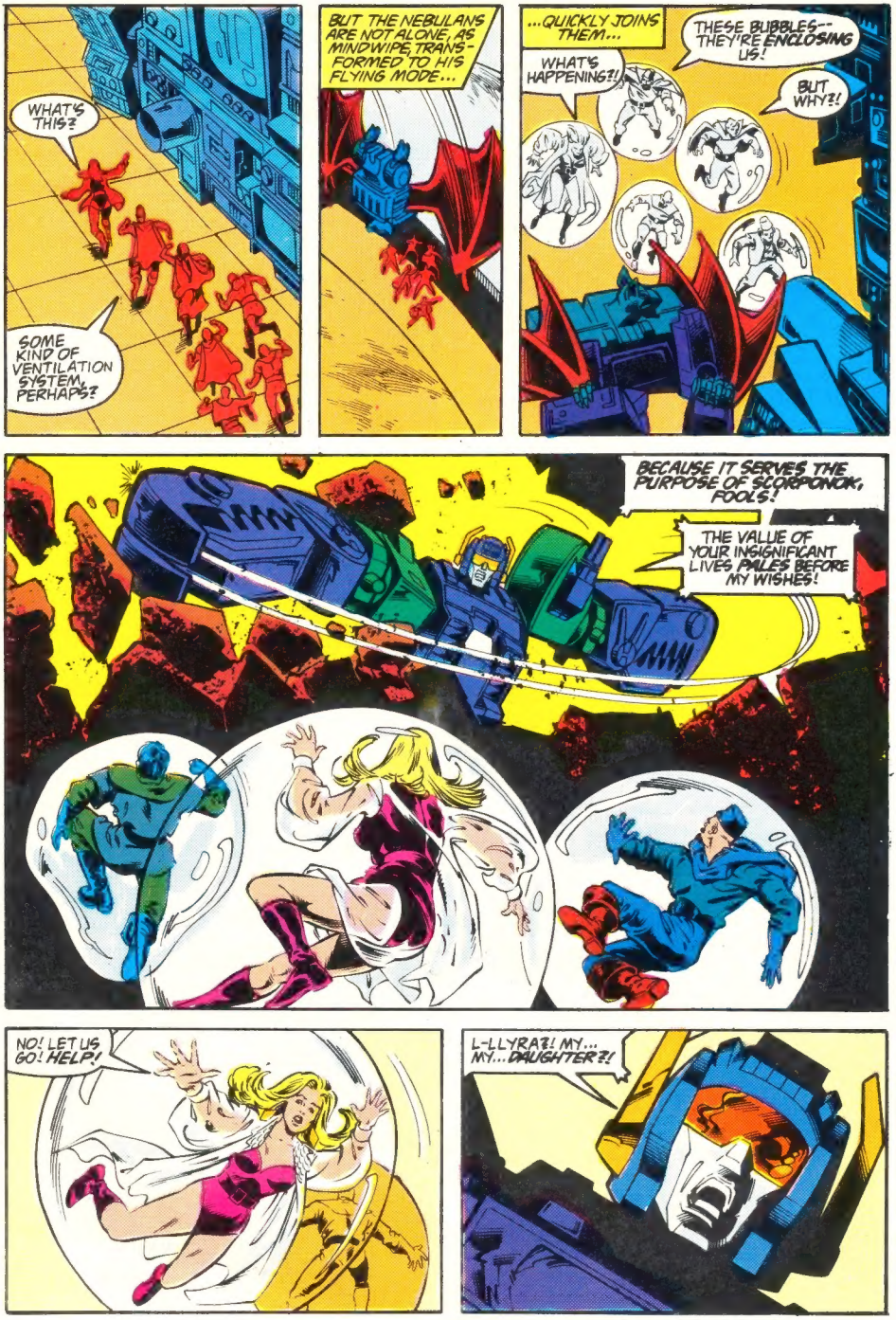
ZARAK AND THE OTHERS HAVE UNDERGONE THE SAME BIO-ENGINEERING THAT MADE US HEADMASTERS!
THIS IS A TRAP! AUTOBOTS--- OOFF!
APEFACE!
BZZIP BZOW
AT YOUR DIS-SERVICE, FORTRESS MAXIMUS!
BWAM
THANKS, BUT I'LL PASS!
YEOWW!!
BESIDES, LOOKS LIKE WEIRDWOLF AND SKULL-CRUNCHER NEED MY ATTENTION!
AND IN THE HOVERCRAFT...
IT... IT'S SO MUCH WORSE THAN I THOUGHT!
BY THE RINGS OF NEBULOS! LOOK AT THE VIOLENCE, THE CARNAGE!
HOW COULD I HAVE ANY HOPE FOR GALEN... AFTER SEEING HIM INVOLVED IN THIS?!

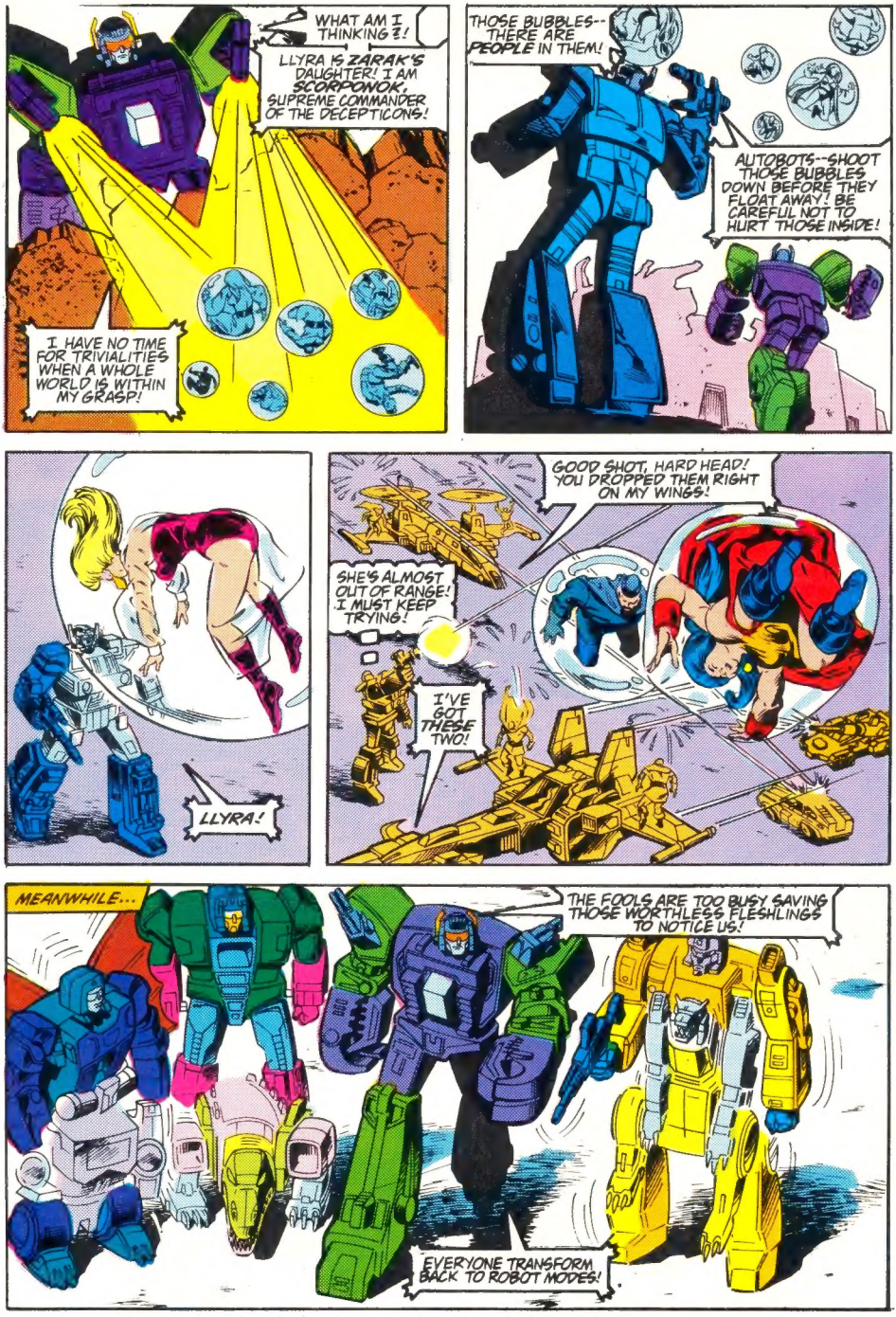
MEANWHILE...
THEY'RE TOO FAST, TOO AGILE!
CAN'T GET A GOOD SHOT!
BY INTERFACING NEBULAN AND TRANSFORMER MINDS, AS WE DID, THE DECEPTICONS HAVE APPARENTLY IMPROVED THEIR BATTLE SKILLS AS MUCH AS WE DID!
YOU INSULT US, FORTRESS MAXIMUS!
WE'RE MORE IMPROVED!
KRUNCH
ARRGGHH!!
THE POWER--IT WELLS UP WITHIN ME, FILLING ME, OVERFLOWING!
IT'S MORE THAN I CAN DESCRIBE... MORE THAN I COULD HAVE EVER IMAGINED!
I CAN RIP BRAINSTORM IN TWO WITH A SHRUG!
NOT SO FAST, SCORPONOK! SKULLCRUNCHER WANTS A WORD WITH YOU FIRST!
WHAT--?!
OOKF
WHAK


CHEW ON THIS, HIGHBROW!
BONK
I PREFER ENERGON CUBES, APEFACE!
WHOO... MUST TRANSFORM... GET MY FEET ON THE GROUND.
HE HIT THE STABILIZING UNDER-CARRIAGE!
THUD

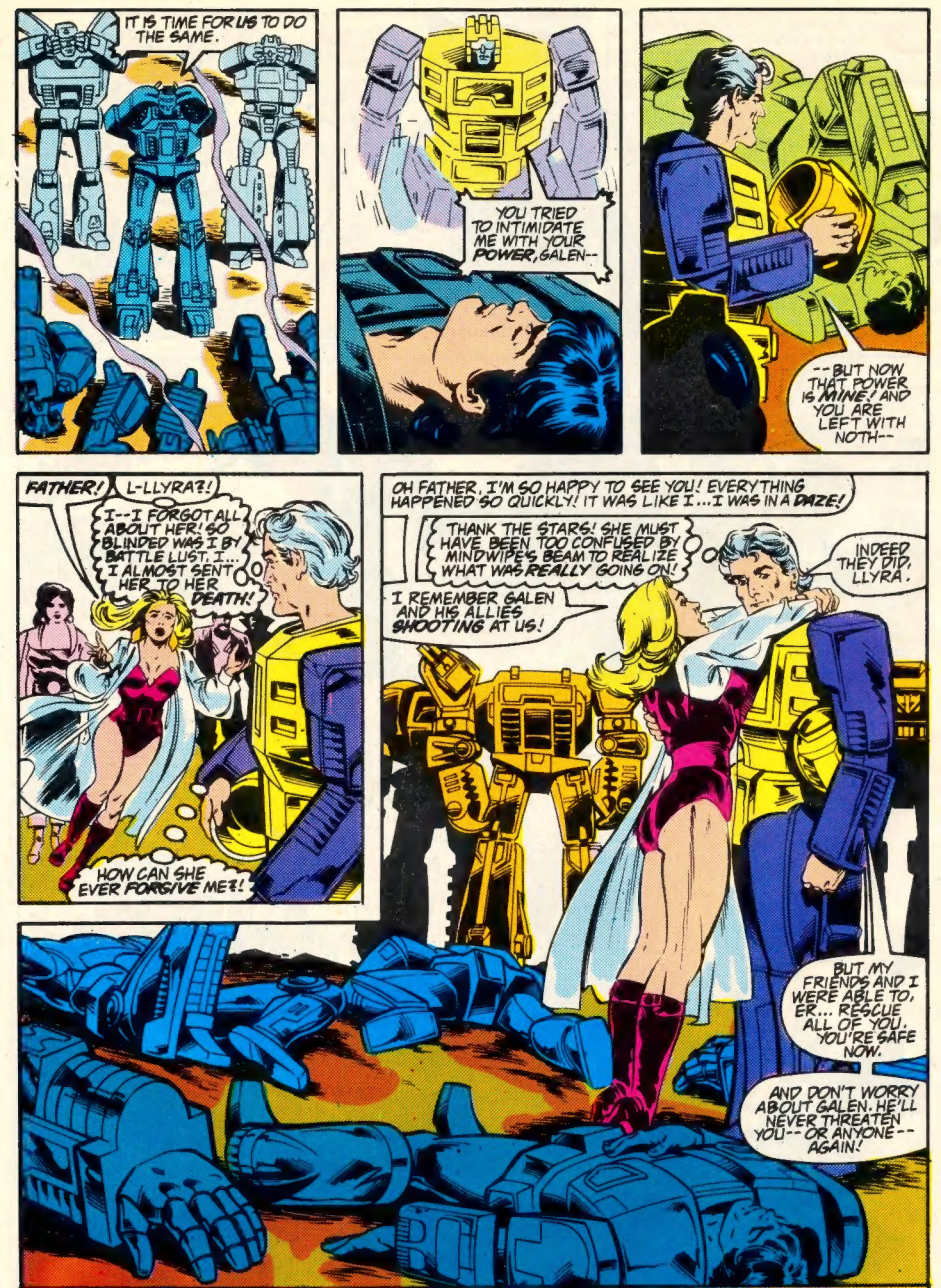

MINDWIPE. WE NEED A DIVERSION!
NO PROBLEM.
THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY!
OHH...

I MEAN YOU NO HARM.
I JUST WANT YOU TO LOOK INTO MY HYPNOTIC GAZE AND LISTEN--
--ENTER THE BUILDING.
WE'D BE SAFER INSIDE.
AGREED.
EVERYONE-- HURRY!


WHAT'S THIS?
SOME KIND OF VENTILATION SYSTEM, PERHAPS?
BUT THE NEBULANS ARE NOT ALONE, AS MINDWIPE, TRANSFORMED TO HIS FLYING MODE...
...QUICKLY JOINS THEM...
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
THESE BUBBLES--THEY'RE ENCLOSING US!
BUT WHY?!
BECAUSE IT SERVES THE PURPOSE OF SCORPONOK, FOOLS!
THE VALUE OF YOUR INSIGNIFICANT LIVES PALES BEFORE MY WISHES!
NO! LET US GO! HELP!
L-LLYRA?! MY... MY... DAUGHTER?!


WHAT AM I THINKING?!
LLYRA IS ZARAK'S DAUGHTER! I AM SCORPONOK, SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE DECEPTICONS!
I HAVE NO TIME FOR TRIVIALITIES WHEN A WHOLE WORLD IS WITHIN MY GRASP!
THOSE BUBBLES--THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THEM!
AUTOBOTS--SHOOT THOSE BUBBLES DOWN BEFORE THEY FLOAT AWAY! BE CAREFUL NOT TO HURT THOSE INSIDE!
LLYRA!
GOOD SHOT, HARD HEAD! YOU DROPPED THEM RIGHT ON MY WINGS!
SHE'S ALMOST OUT OF RANGE! I MUST KEEP TRYING!
I'VE GOT THESE TWO!
MEANWHILE...
THE FOOLS ARE TOO BUSY SAVING THOSE WORTHLESS FLESHLINGS TO NOTICE US!
EVERYONE TRANSFORM BACK TO ROBOT MODES!

FINALLY, FORTRESS MAXIMUS'S PHOTON RIFLE CONNECTS, AND...
YOU'RE SAFE NOW, LLYRA.
OHH...
YOU PEOPLE MUST FIND COVER! THE BATTLE ISN'T OVER YET!
OH, BUT IT IS, FORTRESS MAXIMUS, IT IS!
BWAM
BWOOM
AND MOMENTS LATER...
THEY'RE ALL OUT!
THEY NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT 'EM!
THEIR HEADS ARE DISCONNECTING... TRANSFORMING BACK TO NEBULANS!


IT IS TIME FOR US TO DO THE SAME.
YOU TRIED TO INTIMIDATE ME WITH YOUR POWER, GALEN--
--BUT NOW THAT POWER IS MINE! AND YOU ARE LEFT WITH NOTH--
FATHER!
L-LLYRA?!
I--I FORGOT ALL ABOUT HER! SO BLINDED WAS I BY BATTLE LUST, I... I ALMOST SENT HER TO HER DEATH!
HOW CAN SHE EVER FORGIVE ME?!
OH FATHER, I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU! EVERYTHING HAPPENED SO QUICKLY! IT WAS LIKE I...I WAS IN A DAZE!
THANK THE STARS! SHE MUST HAVE BEEN TOO CONFUSED BY MINDWIPE'S BEAM TO REALIZE WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON!
INDEED THEY DID, LLYRA.
I REMEMBER GALEN AND HIS ALLIES SHOOTING AT US!
BUT MY FRIENDS AND I WERE ABLE TO, ER... RESCUE ALL OF YOU. YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT GALEN. HE'LL NEVER THREATEN YOU--OR ANYONE--AGAIN!